



TENNESSEE  
AGRICULTURAL  
STATISTICS  
SERVICE

P.O. Box 41505  
Nashville, TN 37204-1505  
1-800-626-0987

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/tn>

cooperating with  
Tennessee Department  
of Agriculture



# Agri-News

**Gene Danekas**  
**State Statistician**

[nass-tn@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass-tn@nass.usda.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TENNESSEE FARMERS PREPARING FOR UPCOMING CROP SEASON**

With the 2000 crop season upon us, farmers all across the Volunteer State are looking to erase the memories of 1999 when both crops and pastures suffered through a devastating summer drought coupled with poor commodity prices. Producers are planning for the upcoming growing season and are looking at both commodity markets and long term weather forecasts to help in their decision making. Based on information obtained from the March 1 Planting Intentions Survey conducted by the Tennessee Agricultural Statistics Service, many farmers intend to shift more acreage into corn and cotton this year at the expense of soybeans. Gene Danekas, State Statistician, commented that cotton in particular looked to be the best bet this year in terms of economic returns. "Prices are still not at the level producers would like to see, but they do look good relative to other commodities, and are up quite a bit from last year." Danekas went on to say that price is not the only contributing factor leading to the intended increase in cotton, "Farmers are also concerned that we may be heading into another drought this summer. As a result, many are choosing to plant more cotton due to its ability to withstand dry conditions better than corn or soybeans." Survey results show that farmers plan to increase cotton by 30,000 acres from last year while decreasing soybean acreage by the same amount. If realized, this will lead to a total **cotton** acreage of 600,000 and total **soybean** acreage of 1,220,000. Farmers intend to increase **corn** acreage by 10,000 acres from last year and plant a total of 640,000 acres. **Winter wheat**, at 580,000 acres, is up 16 percent from a year earlier, while **burley tobacco** acreage decreased to 47,000 acres, mainly due to a reduction in quota. Danekas was quick to note that, "The survey results show only what producers intend to do as of March 1. Changes in prices and weather conditions will be major factors in determining what farmers actually choose to produce this year."

### **COTTON ACREAGE CONTINUES TO INCREASE**

After reaching a ten-year low in 1998, cotton acreage in Tennessee has steadily increased over the past two years. Improved prices and fears of another drought this summer are the two main reasons farmers plan to increase acreage in 2000. Based on Survey results, growers intend to plant 600,000 acres of cotton, if realized this will be 30,000 more than was planted in 1999 and the highest acreage in Tennessee since 1995.

### **CORN PRODUCERS GETTING AN EARLY START ON PLANTING**

An unseasonably warm Spring has allowed corn producers to make excellent progress with field preparation and a few producers have already planted a small amount of their intended acreage. Farmers intend to plant 640,000 acres, 10,000 more than was planted in 1999. Improvement in price is the major reason for the slight increase in acreage from a year ago. With warmer temperatures just around the corner, farmers are about to put planting into high gear.

### **SOYBEAN ACREAGE DOWN FOR NOW**

Soybean producers intend to plant 1.22 million acres this year, 30,000 less than the previous two years. At the current time, price and the threat of a summer drought are the main reasons for the shift in acreage. On the other hand, if farmers are unable to plant corn and cotton due to adverse weather early in the spring, some of this acreage will ultimately fall back into soybeans due to its much wider planting window.

**(OVER)**

TOBACCO ACREAGE A DIRECT RESULT OF CHANGES IN ALLOTMENTS

As it does traditionally, tobacco acreage responds directly to changes in allotments. With the significant reduction in quota for burley, growers expect to transplant 47,000 acres, the lowest acreage since 1996. Allotments for dark fire-cured tobacco are up in 2000 and so is intended acreage. As a result, Type 22, Eastern dark-fired and Type 23, Western dark-fired are estimated to be up 7 percent at 7,600 and 610 acres, respectively. Type 35, Dark air-cured is expected to be 630 acres, up 5 percent from a year earlier.

HAY ACREAGE UNCHANGED FROM A YEAR AGO

Hay producers intend to harvest 1.88 million acres of this year, the same amount that was harvested in 1999. If realized, this will tie the record acreage. Except for a few cold snaps, Tennessee experienced a very mild winter. This was good news for the State’s livestock producers. Last summer’s drought hurt overall hay production and forced many to feed hay much earlier than normal. As a result, many had been concerned about hay shortages before the end of winter. Historically, hay acreage can fluctuate a great deal during the growing season as producers opt to cut additional hay from pastures or miss cuttings due to adverse weather.

WHEAT ACREAGE UP, SORGHUM REMAINS UNCHANGED

Farmers seeded 580,000 acres of winter wheat last fall, 16 percent more than the previous year and the largest acreage in the State since 1996. The crop is currently rated in mostly good-to-excellent condition with little to no insect or disease problems reported. Producers are wrapping-up fertilizer and herbicide applications. Sorghum continues to be a minor crop in Tennessee. Producers intend to plant 20,000 acres, the same amount that was planted in each of the past three years.

PLANTING INTENTIONS: TENNESSEE AND UNITED STATES, MARCH 1, 2000 WITH COMPARISONS				
Crop	1998	1999	Intended 2000 <sup>1</sup>	2000/1999
TENNESSEE	1,000 Acres			Percent
Corn	700	630	640	102
Sorghum	20	20	20	100
Winter wheat	570	500	580	116
Soybeans	1,250	1,250	1,220	98
Cotton, all	450	570	600	105
Tobacco, all <sup>2</sup>	59.42	59.27	55.84	94
E. Dark-fired (22)	7.30	7.10	7.60	107
W. Dark-fired (23)	0.59	0.57	0.61	107
Burley (31)	51.00	51.00	47.00	92
One-sucker (35)	0.525	0.60	0.63	105
Hay <sup>2</sup>	1,785	1,880	1,880	100
UNITED STATES				
Corn	80,165	77,431	77,881	101
Sorghum	9,626	9,288	8,979	97
Winter wheat	46,449	43,431	43,245	100
Soybeans	72,025	73,780	74,871	101
Cotton, all	13,392.5	14,855.0	15,558.0	105
Tobacco, all <sup>2</sup>	717.61	644.25	500.70	78
E. Dark-fired (22)	11.15	10.85	11.60	107
W. Dark-fired (23)	4.19	4.12	4.41	107
Burley (31)	307.10	300.40	207.70	69
One-sucker (35)	2.98	3.45	3.63	105
Hay <sup>2</sup>	60,076	63,160	63,052	100

<sup>1</sup> Intended planting for 2000. <sup>2</sup> Acres harvested.